

A TRACT FOR THE TIMES.

FIRST:

THE WAY TO
NATIONAL WEALTH AND GREATNESS.

SECOND:

THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION
AND
SPECULATIVE AND PRACTICAL REFORMS.

THIRD:

ECONOMY.
THE GREAT IMPENDING DANGER, AND HOW
TO PREPARE FOR IT.

BY JOSEPH BARKER.

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THE WAY TO NATIONAL WEALTH AND GREATNESS.

IF things were rightly managed, every healthy man in England would be able to support himself and his family in comfort, and raise himself, in time, to a state of independence. There is no necessity that any working man in this country should suffer either from want or the fear of want. The poverty and wretchedness from which so many suffer, and the anxious fears by which they are so often racked, might all be prevented, and that by a few of the simplest and very easiest reforms imaginable.

1. Suppose a tax were laid on all neglected and uncultivated lands in the kingdom, a tax rather heavier than that which is laid on lands that are cultivated, this of itself would cause a considerable improvement in the condition of the working classes.

The first effect of such a tax would be, to enable the government to remit some other tax that now presses injuriously on the toiling and trading classes.

The second effect would be to induce the land-owners either to cultivate their neglected lands, and so make them yield something to pay the tax, or to sell them to those who *would* cultivate them. The result would be, that the demand for labourers would be increased. Unemployed workmen would find work. The number of paupers would be diminished. Poor rates would be lighter, and crime would be abated, and the amount of the nation's wealth would be increased.

After a few years, the men on the new lands would produce more food than they would be able to consume. They would send the surplus to market, and take manufactured goods in return. This would both make food cheaper, and trade better.

Another advantage would be, that much capital that is now invested in the United States of America, and in other

foreign countries, would find safe and profitable investment at home. Much of the money invested in American lands, American railroads, and other foreign speculations, is lost; and that which is not lost, might prove more useful both to the owners and to the country if invested at home. Now the purchase and cultivation of all our good, neglected or ill-used lands, would find profitable employment for nearly all the spare capital in the country.

Again: we have, in our colonies, millions upon millions of acres of land, as good as any to be found in any part of the earth. Suppose Government should offer to all who might be disposed to emigrate, forty, eighty, or a hundred and sixty acres of this land at a very low rate, or on condition that they should settle on it and keep it in cultivation, the condition of the toiling and trading classes would be still further improved.

In the first place, the unemployed labourers in the country, as well as many small capitalists, would go to the colonies, and make themselves farms. The labour market would, in consequence, be still further relieved; and pauperism, poor rates, crime and misery, would be still further diminished. The settlers in the colony would soon have large quantities of surplus produce which they would wish to exchange for manufactured goods, and this would give new life to every useful trade at home. The whole population of the country would soon have employment. Wages would gradually rise. People would be able to purchase larger supplies of the necessaries and comforts of life. The increased consumption would keep up prices; every class would be benefitted, and the wealth of the country generally increased.

The *New York Tribune*, one of the best papers in America, estimates the value of every English emigrant that settles in the United States at two hundred pounds. Many take with them money to that amount; and those who take no money, take money's worth to that amount in their strength, and skill, and industry. The southern states buy black men for two hundred pounds a head, and white men are supposed to be worth twice as much to the North. When, therefore, Great Britain sends out 200,000 people a year to America, as she sometimes has done, she makes a yearly present to America of £100,000,000 sterling, a sum sufficient, if kept at home, to pay off the national debt in eight years, and so reduce the burden of taxation one half.

We have seen how the production of surplus food in the colonies would enrich the nation, and improve the condition of the toiling and trading classes. But the colonists would supply us with other useful articles besides food. They would send us large quantities of wool, and make our cloth manufacturers independent of other lands for the supply of the raw material. They would supply us with any quantity of hides, and make good leather cheaper and more abundant. They could send unlimited quantities of various kinds of hair for building and upholstering purposes. They could supply any amount of hemp and flax for cordage and fine linen. They could produce any quantity of silk. They could raise sugar, tea, coffee, rice, dates, figs, raisins, prunes, and spices in abundance. They could supply the joiner and carpenter with timber, rosin, and pitch. They could supply the chemist and apothecary with drugs. They could supply the painter with colours, and the manufacturer with dyes. They could supply the nation at large with gold, silver, copper, lead and iron; for we have mines of all these metals that are all but inexhaustible. They could supply the nation with all the cotton it could manufacture, and so make us independent of the slave states of America. This, of itself, would be an incalculable advantage. It is madness, it is wickedness, to leave so great a portion of our population dependent for their bread, and the nation dependent for its peace, on the uncertain labour of American slaves. The present dispute between the Northern and Southern states, may any moment give rise to civil war. Civil war would cause an insurrection of the slaves. The result would be a fearful destruction of property; and the general cessation of productive labour. Lancashire and Yorkshire, and many parts of Scotland would be ruined, and the nation at large embarrassed and distressed. I am living every day in dread of evil tidings from America. The quarrel between the North and the South may not be carried to the last extremes; but it may. When burning coals are thrown about in a powder magazine, the worst that can be dreaded may happen any moment. And this is just what is taking place across the Atlantic. Slavery has made that land one vast magazine of the most terrible explosives and combustibles: and now the enraged inhabitants are brandishing their torches, and throwing at each other fire-balls, rockets, and grenades; and an explosion, and a conflagration of the

most fearful kind, and on the largest scale, may destroy the nation, and startle Europe, at any moment. I say it is wicked for our government or nation to allow millions of our people to depend on such precarious sources for the labour by which they live. England ought to have cultivated her territories, and secured a steady supply of cotton from her own free sons, long ago. She ought to be ashamed of her mad and criminal neglect. She ought especially, without a day's delay, to reform her plan. The colonies should be opened at once, and made as attractive to our surplus labour and capital as possible.

And why should we be dependent on others for grain or roots, for fruit or flesh, for spices and perfumes, for wool or flax, for silk or rags, for oil or dyes, for timber or metals? Why not encourage the hardy, the adventurous, and the indefatigable workmen of England to develop the infinite wealth of our colonies, and make themselves and their offspring, and their countrymen at home, through untold centuries, rich, happy, and free?

At present our colonies produce but little, while they cost a great deal. The course we recommend would make them produce wealth unbounded, and not cost one farthing. Let our plan be adopted, and the colonies will soon support and protect themselves, and add greatly to the wealth, the strength, and the security of the Empire.

The *Saturday Review*, some time ago, when calling John Bright to task for some remarks on America, contended that the reason why work was more plentiful, and wages higher, in the United States than in England was, that the United States had an unlimited quantity of land. The *Saturday Review* was wrong. The reason why the working classes in America are better off is not that America possesses large quantities of land, but that she places it at the disposal of the people. We have more land than America. And our lands are as rich, and the climates of many of our territories are as good, as those of the United States. In many cases the climates are better. But our Government has kept the land locked up. It has never placed them at the service of the large body of the people, as the American Government has done. It is doing so to some extent at present, but still it hesitates, and does the thing only by halves, as if it were afraid to allow the people to enrich themselves and their country.

The fact is, many of our rulers *are* afraid. The aristocracy are afraid that if the people of England were made landowners in the colonies, they would compete with them. They think that large supplies of grain and fruit, of wool and flax, from the colonies, would lower the price of their own produce, lead to a reduction of rents, and a diminution of their incomes. They kept up the corn and provision laws as long as they could, to check the supply of grain and fruit and flesh from abroad, and so keep up their incomes at the expense of the people. And now that foreigners are allowed to compete with them, they dread competition from their own people.

Then some of the manufacturers are afraid, that if many people were drawn to the colonies, they would find it hard to get workmen, or hard to keep down wages. Hence the landowners and the manufacturers, who are so often at strife with each other, are both at war with the toiling classes, and unite their efforts to prevent the peopling of our vast and invaluable territories.

There are many, however, who know that the fears of the landowners and manufacturers are not well grounded. The abolition of the corn and provision laws which was to ruin the English farmers and landowners, has already increased their wealth. The indirect gain has proved greater than the direct loss. And so it would be with the peopling of the colonies. It might, for a time, embarrass the manufacturers, and lessen the incomes of some of the aristocracy; but in time it would benefit all. And many are enlightened enough to know all this. And if the people unite to press the measures we suggest, there is reason to believe they will succeed, and by their success place wealth and independence within the reach of every family in the empire.

If the English Government had acted on the plan we suggest for the last fifty years, the nation might have been three times as rich, and five times as strong as it is at present. American slavery would have died a natural death. Riots and insurrections at home would have been prevented. Our influence in Europe might have been five times as great as it is at present. Our Chinese wars and Indian mutinies might have been prevented. The intellectual and moral character of our whole population might have been greatly improved, and the state of England, and the state of Europe

and America, might have been vastly more cheering. It is mournful to think what opportunities of benefitting the nation, and of blessing the world, our Government has thrown away. Is it not time for the people to unite and demand a change?

It may be said it is impossible to obtain the desirable change without a reform of Parliament. We think otherwise. We think it would be easier to obtain colonial than Parliamentary reform. But if not, why should we not ask for both at once? Why should we not make use of colonial mismanagement as an argument for Parliamentary reform? And why should we not stimulate people to seek for Parliamentary reform, by showing them how much might be done by a better Parliament, towards improving the condition of the toiling classes, and enriching the whole community?

THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION AND SPECULATIVE AND PRACTICAL REFORMS.

How far we owe our wealth to the English constitution, we do not pretend to know. The probability is, that we owe it principally to certain peculiarities of character in the more influential portion of Englishmen, and to the action of local or climatic influences on our habits and pursuits. Our constitution, as it is called, or our system of government, is itself the result of the same peculiarities of character, modified by local, physical influences. Our wealth, our power, and our constitution are all, to a great extent, the outgrowth of our natural character, the results of those qualities which distinguish influential portions of the English people, from the people of other nations.

Constitutions do not make nations: nations make constitutions. And when nations make constitutions hastily, in imitation of other nations, they cannot make them work. And when they frame them according to the theory of some speculative thinker or writer, they seldom, perhaps never, answer. The French imported the American constitution, but it would not work. If they were to try the English constitution, it would not answer. The English system of

government would answer nowhere but *in* England, or among English people, placed under somewhat English influences. And no constitution would answer so well for England at present, as the one we have. And if we got a new one, we should modify it; we should bring it into harmony with our habits, our prejudices, our tastes, our English character.

A new constitution would not change us so much as we should change it. If we had a republic, we should make it aristocratic and monarchical; just as we now make our monarchy and aristocracy democratic. Whatever theoretical constitution we might have, the government would be much the same as at present.

Of course our government changes; but it changes, as old fashioned genuine Englishmen change, slowly and reluctantly. It improves, but it does so almost imperceptibly. It travels like the snail, not like the frog. It takes no great leaps. Even Revolutions in England make no great changes in the working of the government. English people,—the genuine, influential English people,—cannot bear to be hurried. And they cannot bear to be forced. They must act freely, and take their time, or not act at all. They must move as their own strong instincts prompt, and not as meddling counsellors advise or urge. They can neither understand, nor believe, nor decide anything in a hurry, or on compulsion.

Nor do we wish to see it otherwise. We should be sorry to see the essentials of the English character changed. We should be glad to see the knowledge of Englishmen increased. We should be glad to see the great active powers of the English nation under the guidance of political and physical science. And this, if we live long enough, we shall see. But we have no desire to see hasty, wholesale experiments made; and such experiments, in fact, we never expect to see. English people generally are not of the speculative, theoretical kind, but of the common-sense, practical kind. They act as if they believed that no exact or scientific theory of the English nation were possible: and they are right. Your philosophic theories of politics and law will no more fit the real, living English nation, than your mathematical definitions, and your theories of *geometry* (earth measuring) will fit the real many-formed earth on which we live. The islands and continents take the form

given them by the internal forces which give them birth, modified slowly, but, in the course of ages, greatly, by the action of air and water, aided by cold and heat. They never assume geometrical forms, or mathematical proportions. They are neither squares nor circles, neither triangles nor parallelograms. The lines are neither straight nor spiral. The surfaces are something more than length and breadth. The solids are neither cubes nor cones, neither pyramids nor spheres, neither prisms nor cylinders. They are all irregular, the product of varied and conflicting forces. And there is no power in nature or in man to make them otherwise. You may take a single block and make it a cube, a sphere, or a pyramid; but you cannot reduce mountains or continents to regular shapes; and if you could, your labour would be useless, or something worse.

And so it is with nations, and especially with this great old English nation. No theory of abstract right, no theory of liberty or equality, no system of pure democracy, no definite constitution, will fit it. You may, when you can select your materials, form a joint stock company, or a benefit society, according to your theories of right or equality; but you can never bring the nation into any such shape. The nation and its government have received their shape from the working of a thousand various and conflicting forces hidden in the depths of English humanity, and modified by the action of external agencies, such as the influence of other nations, of imported creeds, of foreign literature, and modern science; and you can no more change their shapes so as to bring them into harmony with any of your abstract theories, than you can change the orbit of the earth. And if you *could* so change them, it would be folly and sin to try.

The working of the great moral forces of the English nation may be rendered more beneficent by the increase and spread of science among the people: some of the conflicting forces may be harmonised; the direction of some of those forces may be changed, and their action rendered vastly more conducive to the general good: but you can never put everything right by any wholesale change of plan or theory.

It is, nevertheless, true, that as external agencies of air and water, light and electricity, heat and cold, are always modifying the forms of mountains and valleys,

islands and continents, and clothing with beauty, and filling with life, regions which would otherwise be dreary desolation; so the influence of science and culture on men and nations, may so modify laws and government, customs and institutions, as greatly to lessen, perhaps entirely to destroy, many of the evils of society, and make man's life incalculably more beautiful, and vastly more happy, than it is at present.

While therefore we would deprecate attempts at violent and wholesale changes in England, we would favour and labour to promote the diffusion of truer and larger views of human interests and national welfare among all classes, and endeavour to have both the machinery and the action of government so far changed, as to render them conducive to the wealth, the health, the virtue, and the happiness of all classes, and of all nations.

It is a fact, that you cannot, at present, bring the mass of the English people to put themselves about at all to obtain great, organic changes in the English constitution. You cannot revive the chartist agitation. You can hardly muster a respectable demonstration in favour of Lord John Russell's, or Mr. Bright's Reform Bill. The people seem to have got it into their heads, that a mere increase in the number of voters would probably not secure for us better government,—that more depends on the character than on the number of the electors,—that we might have better measures with our present franchise, if all would do their duty; and that we might have worse measures with a lower franchise, unless the people were more enlightened and virtuous. The people seem to have got it into their heads, that the things to be aimed at are regular work, short hours, good wages, cheap provisions, and a better education, and that these may be obtained by a few simple practical reforms, which government may be more easily induced to effect, than it can be induced to reorganise itself.

And perhaps the people are right. And perhaps the theorists are wrong. The opening of the colonies to English emigrants and English capital, the imposition of a tax on land, proportioned, not to its present value, but to its natural capabilities,—to what it *would* be worth if duly cultivated,—might, if accompanied with personal reform, do vastly more for the English people than any alteration in the law of elections, or any change in the constitution of

Parliament. The Free Trade measures have done more for England than any other measures of the present century. True, it may be said that we owe Free-trade to the measure of Parliamentary reform, by which it was preceded. And this perhaps is true. But if we could get Free-trade with our present franchise, what needful measures may we not get, if we unite our powers? Besides a loud and general call for colonial reform, might be the very thing to show the necessity of parliamentary reform, if it could not be obtained without such reform. And an earnest and general demand for colonial reform might be the very thing to *unite the people in efforts* for parliamentary reform, if parliamentary reform were found to be essential to colonial reform.

In any case, therefore, it is best to begin with demands for practical reforms. If we get them on demand, all right: if we do not, the demand for parliamentary reform will then be in order, and the people will be in just the proper state to make and urge the demand. In any case, beneficial, practical measures are the *end*, and theoretical or organic changes only the means. And though you may, at times, rouse people to action, and fill them with enthusiasm in favour of an abstraction, you will, as a general rule, be unable to interest English people in favour of abstractions or theories except so far as they may seem likely to yield them substantial benefit.

One of the most important objects of English Reformers should be, to obtain a supply of cotton from our own colonies, and so render ourselves independent of the uncertain politics of America. To rely on so dangerous an institution as American slavery, for the material of one of our principal manufactures, is foolish in the extreme. But is it necessary to have parliamentary reform in order to obtain a supply of cotton from our colonies and dependencies? If so, we ought to unite and demand it, and press the demand in such a way as to ensure compliance with it. But if it be not, why trouble ourselves about it? Why not request or demand instead, the needful opportunities and facilities for obtaining the necessary supply of cotton? Our own impression is that Parliament as at present constituted would make no objection to afford facilities for the production and collection of cotton in the colonies.

Another great reform that is needed is, the offer of land in the colonies on reasonable terms to all who may wish, or

for all who may think it advisable, to emigrate. This would only be an extension of the measure just considered. Would it not be possible to obtain this boon also without parliamentary reform? We think it would. We can try; and if we find it cannot, we may then begin our cry for parliamentary reform with abundant reason, and with every prospect of success.

If we direct our attention first and chiefly to beneficent practical reforms, we shall be likely to unite all the wisest and best in our favour. Those who may oppose us will be weak in proportion as they prove themselves unreasonable, unjust, or inhuman. Those parties in the legislature which set themselves against us will lose their influence, and those who aid our cause will increase their own strength. This will make it all the easier to obtain parliamentary reform, if at length it should be found to be necessary.

But if we begin with agitating theoretical parliamentary reform, we shall neither unite the better portions of the people, nor the better portions of our legislators and literary men, in our favour. We shall neither have that enthusiasm among ourselves, nor that sympathy from others, which are necessary to ensure success. Our friends will gain no credit or strength in aiding us, nor will our opponents lose much credit or influence by opposing us. We shall be dispirited. Our organisations will fall to pieces, and the members be scattered abroad. The name of Reform will fall into disrepute, and needful, practical measures will become less popular. The power of the selfish, interested classes will be increased; the courage of the corrupt will be revived; and the interests of the suffering classes sacrificed or damaged for years.

In conclusion, then, let us make it our first endeavour to improve, by personal efforts, our own character, and our own condition. Let us make it our second endeavour to promote the intellectual and moral improvement of the people at large. Let us make it our third endeavour, by united efforts, to obtain all needful, practical reforms. And let us, lastly, if we find it really necessary, try to reform the law of elections, and change the constitution and character of the House of Commons.

ECONOMY.

THE GREAT IMPENDING DANGER, AND HOW
TO PREPARE FOR IT.

THERE is danger of bad times, and we had better prepare for them by timely economy. The news may reach us any day of the commencement of civil war in America. Civil war would lead at once to an insurrection of the slaves. An insurrection of the slaves would be accompanied with a fearful destruction of property. Houses, mills, warehouses, would be burnt down, and plantations destroyed. The production of cotton would cease. It would be two or three years before the evil could be remedied. It might be four or five. The want of cotton would ruin Lancashire and impoverish Yorkshire, and embarrass every part of the country. Almost every branch of trade would suffer. Hundreds of thousands would be thrown out of work, and hundreds of thousands more would only be partially employed, and the wages of all kinds of labour would come down. And there would be no chance of slipping over to America and getting work and good wages there. Work would be scarcer and wages lower there than here, except perhaps in the powder mills, and in such businesses as were specially concerned with supplying the materials and machinery of war. Even Canada would probably be disturbed, and cease to be inviting to emigrants. And New Zealand is in disorder. And Australia is a great way off, and can be reached only at great expense. And a large and sudden influx of people would cause a glut of the labour market and a famine. New places can only provide for new comers gradually, a few at a time. To *waste* anything in such perilous times is the extreme of folly. The difference between economy and extravagance now, may make all the difference between plenty and starvation six months to come. Smoke, drink, and gormandise at present, and you may find yourself unable to get bread or potatoes enough to keep you alive next winter. Run into debt, and

you may neither have cash nor credit next Christmas. Your children may be crying for bread, and you may be asking for out-door relief, or meditating gloomily on suicide.

Of course, the ruin of America is not absolutely certain. The danger may possibly be turned aside by a timely compromise. But good and sensible people will provide for the worst. The madman alone will be indifferent to a manifest peril, and trust to a doubtful chance of salvation.

Besides, if the threatened calamity should not come, you will be all the better for a little economy. You are very different from me if a little money in hand is not vastly more agreeable than an empty purse and a heavy debt at the grocer's and butcher's. And if the dreaded evil come, twenty or thirty pounds beforehand may be your salvation. And what, at best, do you get by your extravagance? Your pipe and cigars, your beer and wine, do you no good. They give you no strength. They yield you no increase of enjoyment. They diminish your strength. They injure your health. They enfeeble your mind. They lessen your enjoyment. They may add to your gratification for an hour or two; but your loss, in the long run, is greater than your gain. You must pay with headache and heartache in the morning, for your unnatural exhilaration in the evening. Your foolish indulgences in youth, may entail bitter mortifications in age. The temperate man has more enjoyment even at present than the spendthrift, and his lot is incalculably better in the future. There is indulgence which leads to ruin, and self-restraint which ensures salvation.

Then think of your wife and children. Is there nothing you can do, by the help of your spare cash, to add to their comfort? Would it not be better to spend your tobacco and cigar money in buying a few useful books, and giving your children a superior education? Would not your ale and wine money prove more useful in the shape of a comfortable freehold house, and a nice little garden?

And would you not feel yourself more of a man, if, instead of spending your evenings and Sundays in inns and coffee-rooms, you were to spend a fair share of them with your wife and children? Have you so far lost your sense of propriety,—have you so far injured your conscience,—that you can smoke and drink your good money, and throw your spare hours away in folly, and go home at ten or eleven o'clock, and meet your wife and children without a blush?

Can you so far wrong your family, and not hate and reproach yourself? When I cease to prefer the comfort of my wife and family to the indulgence of my own selfish appetites,—when I can leave them alone and cheerless, and spend my spare hours in the company of the foolish or vicious, let me die. For an untimely death is less fearful than a base, unnatural life. And even widowhood and orphanage, sad as they are, are lighter torments, than to be mocked, and plagued, and dishonoured by an unnatural husband and father. A good man, when he has done his best for his family, never thinks he has done enough. With what shame, with what horror, with what loathing would the selfish, reckless spendthrift stare at himself, if he could once be brought to see his conduct in its proper light!

But what delight the considerate and devoted husband, and the good, kind father experiences, when he finds himself able, by steady industry and wise self-government, to keep his wife and children cheerful and happy! The smile with which he is greeted by that wife, and the joyous shout with which he is welcomed by his children, when he enters at evening his tidy dwelling, are worth a world of such wretched pleasures as the spendthrift finds in smoke, or wine, or drunken jollity.

And even if you have no wife or children, there are better ways of spending your spare time and money than wasting them on smoke and drink. There is nothing peculiarly great or noble in puffing a cigar or drinking beer. The meanest vagabond on earth, the basest villain, the filthiest profligate, the most stupid dunce and the most unmitigated scoundrel, can guzzle beer and smoke cigars. And smoking and drinking seem the fit accompaniments of the stupid and the bad. I should like to have something better for my spare cash and time,—something that would make me more of a man. Give me a supply of useful books, and a heart to read them. Give me a stock of knowledge, and a disposition to spread it abroad for the good of my fellow-men. Give me the virtues and the accomplishments which will secure me the respect of the wise and good, and the confidence of all who know me. Give me an acquaintance with the wonders of nature, and with the mysteries of my own existence. Let me delight myself in communion with the great and good, and let me please myself, if reason will allow me, with the hope that I may one day be of their

number. If I cannot expect to be a philosopher, I may hope to be a MAN. In any case, whether America rush headlong to destruction, and involve our country in loss and trouble or not, it is best, it is safest, it is noblest, it is happiest, to spend what time and money we may have to spare in cultivating our minds, in improving our characters, in adding to the comfort of our wives and children, and in making some provision for the uncertain future.

And now, my dear friends, I have said all that I have to say. I have said it in a simple and unassuming manner, and I have said it in a manner which I hope will be acceptable to you. I have said it in a manner which I hope will be acceptable to you.

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